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CHUCK HAGEL

P R E S S R E L E A S E



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Senate Votes to Ban Funding for OSHA Ergonomics Standards

Washington, D.C. – The Senate voted on Thursday to bar the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) from promulgating its proposed ergonomics standards for one year. The ban was attached as an amendment to the annual spending bill for Labor, Health & Human Services and Education.

“I am committed to ensuring that America’s workplaces are safe,” said U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Nebraska), a cosponsor of the amendment. “But I am concerned about the millions of dollars and thousands of hours businesses would have to spend to meet OSHA’s unfounded and unaccountable regulations.”

Ergonomics is the science of ‘fitting the job to the person.’ The real-world application of ergonomics typically involves creating workplace environments which mitigate the affect of repetitive motion on musculoskeletal disorders.

“The goal of preventing injuries and disorders from repetitive motion is important,” added Hagel. “We know there is a problem, but we don’t yet know how to fix the problem. Making businesses responsible for injuries that may not have occurred in the workplace is unfair and irresponsible.”

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is currently conducting a study on OSHA’s proposed ergonomics standards. “Despite the fact that the NAS study is not yet complete, OSHA chose to move forward with the standards anyway with inconclusive scientific evidence in support of those standards,” said Hagel. “That makes no sense.”

The amendment to the Labor, Health & Human Services and Education Appropriations bill for FY 2001 bans OSHA from using any funding to promulgate their rule on ergonomics standards. The amendment, sponsored by Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyoming), is identical to language passed in the House of Representatives on June 8.

“We are taught as children to play fair,” added Hagel. “Instead of playing fair, OSHA chose to issue rules and regulations without any scientific backing. The Enzi amendment levels the playing field by continuing to allow small and medium-sized businesses to grow economically while the science of ergonomics is perfected.”